

EXHIBIT T

CASSANDRA HOLIFIELD, PH.D.
UNITED STATES vs STATE OF GEORGIA

December 01, 2022

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IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
ATLANTA DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
Plaintiff,
vs.
STATE OF GEORGIA,
Defendants.
- - - - -

) CIVIL ACTION
) NO. 1:16-cv-03088-ELR
)
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)

VIDEOTAPE DEPOSITION OF
CASSANDRA HOLIFIELD, Ph.D.

Thursday, December 1, 2022, 9:14 a.m., EST

HELD AT:

Parker Poe
1075 Peachtree Street, N.E., Suite 1500
Atlanta, Georgia 30309

WANDA L. ROBINSON, CRR, CCR, No. B-1973
Certified Shorthand Reporter/Notary Public

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1 information to the Georgia Department of Education?

2 A Can you be more specific so I -- I'm not
3 really sure what you mean.

4 Q Sure.

5 MS. GARDNER: I'm going to ask the court
6 reporter to mark this document as Plaintiff's
7 Exhibit 630.

8 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-630 was
9 marked for identification.)

10 BY MS. GARDNER:

11 Q Dr. Holifield, have you been handed what
12 has been marked as Plaintiff's Exhibit 630. This is
13 an email from you to Nakeba Rahming, dated July
14 22nd, 2016. The subject is "Re: FY 17 GNETS Data
15 Management Tool."

16 A Yes.

17 Q And this contains one attachment, which is
18 an Excel spreadsheet with the file name "FY 16 GNETS
19 Annual Verification Report" --

20 A Yes.

21 Q -- "_Data Management Tool"?

22 A Yes.

23 Q The Bates-stamp on this document is
24 GA00041656.

25 Do you recognize this?

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1 A Yes.

2 Q I'd like to ask you to just take a look at
3 this email, which references a data management tool,
4 which is what I want to ask you about.

5 A Okay.

6 Q So I'm hoping this will help refresh your
7 recollection.

8 The attachment to this document was
9 produced as an Excel document, so I'm also going to
10 publish electronically the Excel version of this.

11 A Okay.

12 Q Can you see this document?

13 A Yes.

14 Q You see that the top is captioned -- the
15 attachment is captioned "GNETS Data Management
16 Document"?

17 A Yes, I'm familiar with the document.

18 Q Okay. What is this data management tool?

19 A Basically, it's a spreadsheet that they've
20 asked us to document all the students that receive
21 services in our program, and it tells us how many
22 segments they're with us and when they come into the
23 program and when they leave.

24 Q And when you say "this is a spreadsheet
25 that they've asked us to document all the students

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1 that receive services in our program," who is
2 "they"?

3 A The DOE.

4 Q Okay. So you receive this spreadsheet
5 from the Georgia Department of Education?

6 A Yes.

7 Q Do you receive a new spreadsheet like this
8 every fiscal year?

9 A We update the same spreadsheet.

10 Q Okay. But every year you submit new data
11 to the Georgia Department of Education in this
12 format?

13 A We now -- before we had the GNETS tab in
14 there, we submitted this spreadsheet. Now that we
15 have the tab, we still collect the data but we enter
16 just the numbers into the electronic platform.

17 Q Okay. So at some point before there was a
18 GNETS tab in the Georgia Department of Education
19 portal, you would submit this actual spreadsheet to
20 the Georgia Department of Education?

21 A Yes.

22 Q And what you're saying is that now that
23 you have a GNETS tab in the portal, you simply enter
24 all of the data that would appear in the spreadsheet
25 directly into the portal?

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1 A Yes.

2 Q But you're still transmitting effectively
3 the same data?

4 A Yes.

5 Q I want to just go over some of the
6 information that is included on the spreadsheet, or
7 that you would now report through the portal.

8 The spreadsheet includes students' first
9 and last names, correct?

10 A Uh-hum. Yes.

11 Q On the far left-hand side there is a
12 column for System ID?

13 A Yes.

14 Q What does that mean?

15 A The school district the student is
16 actually located in.

17 Q So that's the student's home school
18 district?

19 A Yes.

20 Q And is this system name just the name of
21 the student's home school district?

22 A It's a -- there's two -- they're basically
23 the same thing. The PGM004 A and B is an actual
24 report that can be pulled by the school district,
25 but then that's the system name.

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1 So it's an identifier for each of the
2 different schools within the district.

3 Q So, for example, for Fulton County School
4 District, which North Metro GNETS serves, there
5 might be a number that identifies Fulton County
6 School District and then the system name would be
7 Fulton County?

8 A Yes.

9 Q And what is the -- there's a field on this
10 form that says Entry Date.

11 Do you see that?

12 A It's the date that the student was -- the
13 first day the child received GNETS services for that
14 year.

15 Q Okay. So not the first day that the
16 student was ever enrolled in GNETS, but the first
17 date that the student attended GNETS for that
18 particular fiscal year?

19 A Yes.

20 Q And correct that you also report exit
21 dates?

22 A Yes.

23 Q And that would apply if a student left
24 GNETS some time before the end of the fiscal year?

25 A Yes.

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1 Q What is Program Type code mean?

2 A I think Program Type is whether it's a
3 school base or a center base, if I recall.

4 Q This particular spreadsheet has the No. 2
5 populated already in the Program Type code. What
6 does the 2 mean?

7 A I don't know. I have to look at the
8 cheat-sheet. It's in the manual.

9 Q But there is one code that's for
10 center-based and one code that's for school-based?

11 A Yes.

12 Q And for each student that would be served
13 by North Metro GNETS you would report whether that
14 student was in a center or was in a school-based
15 location?

16 A Correct.

17 Q What about Program Type Auxiliary code,
18 what does that mean?

19 A I would have to look -- my secretary
20 actually fills this spreadsheet out, so.

21 But it's basically the same kind of
22 information. Again, whether it's school-based or
23 whether it's a center-based program and the number
24 of segments is pretty much everything they're asking
25 in the spreadsheet.

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1 Q Okay. You said there's a cheat-sheet for
2 filling this out?

3 A Yes. In the old GNETS manual.

4 Q Okay. And where did you obtain that GNETS
5 manual?

6 A They gave it to us years ago. In this
7 particular case, 2015, 2016.

8 Q And "they" being the Georgia Department of
9 Education?

10 A Yes.

11 It's also listed the -- in the QBE page of
12 the DOE. It's a question and answer page on their
13 website.

14 Q Okay. This also includes information
15 about the Number of Daily Segments, correct?

16 A Yes.

17 Q And what is that field asking for?

18 A How many periods of the day do they
19 receive services in the GNETS classroom.

20 Q Okay. And what is the total number of
21 segments in a school day?

22 A It depends on whether they're a blocked
23 schedule or whether they are traditional six segment
24 day.

25 Q So traditional schedule would have six

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1 segments?

2 A A traditional would have six.

3 Q And a block would have how many?

4 A Four.

5 Q This spreadsheet also asks for information
6 about mental health services provided at school?

7 A Yes.

8 Q What kind of information would you provide
9 in that field?

10 A If a student's parents -- for example, if
11 they go to LIPT, the Local Interaction Planning
12 Team, and an outside service provider was given
13 permission to come to the schools to provide those
14 services at school, that would go in that field.

15 Q And then this also includes a field that
16 says Mental Health Services Outside of School?

17 A Yes.

18 Q What kind of information would you report
19 in that field?

20 A The same kind of information but a family
21 sometimes will receive services for the entire
22 family rather than just the student.

23 Q Okay. The next field says Move to Less
24 Restrictive Services.

25 A Yes.

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1 Q What does that mean?

2 A They follow the continuum. If an IEP team
3 determines that the child exited a school-based
4 program and went to maybe, say, an IRR class,
5 interrelated class, or back to their general ed
6 classroom, we would document it there.

7 Q And is this kind of like a -- like a
8 checkbox, like they did or they didn't? Or is this
9 more qualitative information that you would enter
10 here?

11 A Qualitative information so we could make
12 sure that the services we're providing, how --
13 basically whether or not the kids are exiting GNETS
14 and going back into their LRE.

15 Q So in a field like this would you explain
16 like what the student is doing if it's one class
17 period out, or if it's IRR, they return fully to
18 their --

19 A No. That would be in the actual student's
20 IEP.

21 Q Okay. So what would the entry here look
22 like, do you know?

23 A Move to a lesser restrictive?

24 Q Uh-hum. (Affirmative.)

25 A For example, if a child was in a

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1 center-based program and then they moved into a
2 school-based program, and from a school-based
3 program back into an IRR classes. So it's kind of
4 like the backwards model of most restrictive to
5 least restrictive, or least restrictive to most
6 restrictive, depending on how their behavior goes.

7 Q Okay. And then the last column here says
8 Basis of GNETS Dismissal.

9 A Uh-hum. (Affirmative.)

10 Q What does that mean?

11 A Basically, did they meet their goals. Did
12 they meet their goals and they were exited from the
13 program based on the IEP, or whether or not they
14 went to a more restrictive program, a residential or
15 day treatment.

16 Q Okay.

17 A Or back to a general ed classroom. It
18 goes both sides of the spectrum.

19 Q And the fields that appear on the
20 spreadsheet are still the fields that you would
21 enter through the Georgia Department of Education
22 portal?

23 A Yes.

24 Q Do parents of North Metro GNETS students
25 have to sign any sort of records release for their

1 you're getting that information from the student's
2 home school system?

3 A Yes.

4 MS. GARDNER: I want to ask the court
5 reporter to mark this document as Plaintiff's
6 Exhibit 631.

7 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-631 was
8 marked for identification.)

9 BY MS. GARDNER:

10 Q You've been handed what's been marked as
11 Plaintiff's Exhibit 631. This is a document on
12 Georgia Department of Education letterhead, I
13 suppose, and the title at the top is "George Network
14 for Educational and Therapeutic Support GNETS FY 22
15 Grant Application."

16 Do you recognize this document?

17 A Yes.

18 Q Is this North Metro GNETS FY 22 Grant
19 Application?

20 A Yes.

21 Q And is this a document that North Metro
22 GNETS produced to the United States in response to a
23 document subpoena?

24 A Yes.

25 Q I want to talk a little bit about the

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1 timing of this grant application.

2 First of all, who puts this grant
3 application together for North Metro?

4 A You mean that completes it? I do.

5 Q Okay, you complete the application.

6 Are you the person who actually submits
7 the application?

8 A I submit it to the portal, yes.

9 Q So you use the Georgia Department of
10 Education portal that you were talking about earlier
11 to submit this?

12 A Yes. So years ago they only had paper.
13 Now we have portal. So I just copy and paste right
14 into the portal this information.

15 Q At the top of this first page it says:
16 "This FY 22 Grant Application and required
17 attachments must be submitted by the fiscal agent
18 through the Consolidated Application no later than
19 June 30th, 2021. Budgets will be reviewed for
20 approval after all required documentation is
21 submitted through the Consolidated Application ."

22 Do you see that?

23 A Yes.

24 Q Who reviews the budgets for approval as
25 it's stated here?

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1 A So I -- my RESA director and my budget
2 person review internally through North Metro and
3 Metro RESA, and then it goes to the DOE, and Vickie
4 Cleveland and Lakesha Stevenson are the DOE GNETS
5 program manager and program specialists that review
6 and approve the document.

7 Q Okay. So just so I'm clear, Vickie
8 Cleveland is the Georgia Department of Education
9 GNETS program manager?

10 A Yes.

11 Q And Lakesha Stevenson is the GNETS program
12 specialist at the Department of Education?

13 A Yes.

14 Q So you're saying that in terms of the
15 review of budgets, once they're submitted through
16 the consolidated application, that it's Ms.
17 Cleveland and Ms. Stevenson who do that review?

18 A Yes.

19 Q So this says that this needs to be
20 submitted no later than June 30, 2021, right?

21 A Yes. But that's a typo.

22 Q Okay. What's the typo?

23 A Because the 2021 is an FY 22 grant
24 application.

25 Is that what you're asking?

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1 Q Yeah. So you're saying that this, this is
2 a typo in terms of when it was supposed to be
3 submitted?

4 A No. Actually, I'm thinking of the wrong
5 year. Nevermind. It's correct.

6 We submit it every June prior to the
7 following year. So the 2021 is correct. I'm sorry.

8 Q Okay. This is very confusing to me, too.
9 So maybe you can help me understand.

10 A So the grant application is -- we have to
11 submit it by June of the previous school year
12 because our calendar years for schools go from July
13 to June.

14 Q Okay.

15 A And then -- so I have to submit it at the
16 end of the previous year for the July 1st, is the
17 beginning of the new school year of 2022.

18 Q Okay. So when you submit this on June 30,
19 2021, is this for your budget that applies for the
20 fall of 2021 and the spring of 2022, or for your
21 budget that applies for a full year leader?

22 A So this is my data from the ending of the
23 previous school year, but the grant application is
24 for funding for the upcoming school year.

25 Q Okay. So in this particular application

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1 the data that would be included would be from the
2 2020-2021 school year?

3 A Yes.

4 Q And this would be reviewed for your budget
5 that would apply in the 2021-2022 school year?

6 A Correct.

7 Q So after you submit this application,
8 which it says has to be submitted no later than June
9 30 of 2021, what is the relative time frame when you
10 would then hear something about this application?

11 A It depends. I mean it varied from a
12 couple of months to -- a couple months.

13 Q A couple months?

14 A Yes.

15 Q Would you hear prior to the start of the
16 school year?

17 A Um, not typically, but our budgets
18 actually extend through September 30th. So even
19 though the fiscal year ends June 30th, the funding
20 doesn't end until like September, so it carries into
21 the next year.

22 Q Okay. And after you submit this, what
23 typically would be the next step in terms of your
24 notification of something about the outcome of this
25 application?

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1 A I would get a call from Vickie saying,
2 hey, you know, can you explain this or can you
3 explain that, I just want to clarify.

4 So we kind of go through each section, if
5 she had question, and then it would be approved.
6 Then we would get -- my CFO would get an approval
7 from grants accounting. I think that's the name of
8 the letter approving the budget amount.

9 Q How does the approval of the budget amount
10 intersect with what I think is often referred to as
11 like your preliminary and/or final allocation?

12 A Can you rephrase that or clarify?

13 Q Sure. I guess my question is, do you ever
14 receive notification of just like your allocation
15 for North Metro GNETS programs in terms of how much
16 money you're receiving for the state grant and the
17 federal grant?

18 A Yes. So after the Governor approves the
19 overall state budget, they send us a -- basically a
20 notification of the different programs, what the
21 award amount is for each GNETS program.

22 Q Okay. And is that process separate from
23 your submitting this grant application?

24 A I think they're all tied together.

25 Q Okay. Do know when you submit a grant

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1 Q I want to turn for a moment back to
2 Plaintiff's Exhibit 631, which is the North Metro
3 GNETS FY 22 Grant Application, and I have just a
4 couple of other questions for you.

5 On Page 33 of that document, and this is
6 connected to evaluations and walk-throughs.

7 At the top, the first dark bullet point
8 says: "Observers will utilize the appropriate GNETS
9 Observation Checklist as a portion of all TKES
10 observations."

11 Do you see that?

12 A Yes.

13 Q What is the GNETS Observation Checklist?

14 A Basically, like I said before, we go
15 through and there are the eight standards, and we
16 make sure that we evaluate and look at at least two
17 areas at a time in there, and we provide feedback on
18 that.

19 Q So is this the observation tool that you
20 were saying --

21 A Yes.

22 Q -- you tweaked?

23 A Uh-hum. (Affirmative.)

24 Q Okay. Then I'd like to have you turn to
25 Page 40. This page discusses iReady.

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1 Do you see that?

2 A Yes.

3 Q What is iReady?

4 A IReady is a diagnostic tool that we
5 progress monitor reading and math skills for our
6 students who aren't on grade level.

7 Q Is that -- is iReady used at all of North
8 Metro's GNETS sites?

9 A Yes, except for high school. It wasn't
10 normed for high school.

11 Q And when you say it wasn't normed for high
12 school, who made that decision?

13 A The, the developer. It's only a K-8
14 program.

15 Q On this page this discusses Usage, Past
16 Rate, and Growth. Do you see that?

17 A Yes.

18 Q And under Usage, it says, looking for
19 students to accomplish greater than or equal to 45
20 minutes per week per subject.

21 A Uh-hum. (Affirmative.)

22 Q Do you see that?

23 A Yes.

24 Q Where does that guideline for usage come
25 from?

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1 A That came from iReady, and the goals that
2 were set across GNETS from the State when we began
3 using iReady.

4 Q When did you begin using iReady?

5 A When the GNETS Strategic Plan was put
6 together, which goes back to Nakeba. So maybe 2015,
7 2016.

8 That's a guess.

9 Q And you said that these were goals that
10 were set across all GNETS by the State --

11 A Yes.

12 Q -- at that time?

13 So all GNETS programs use iReady?

14 A Yes.

15 Q This goal that appears also in usage of 80
16 percent of students with greater than or equal to 45
17 minutes per week per subject, was that also a goal
18 set by the State when iReady was rolled out?

19 A Yes.

20 Q And then under Past Rate it says, "Look
21 for 70% and above."

22 A Yes.

23 Q Is that also a goal that was set by the
24 State when iReady was rolled out?

25 A Yes.

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1 marked for identification.)

2 BY MS. GARDNER:

3 Q You've been handed what's been marked as
4 Plaintiff's Exhibit 634. This is an email thread
5 between you and Vickie Cleveland. The most recent
6 email is from you to Vickie Cleveland on May 9,
7 2018.

8 A Uh-hum. (Affirmative.)

9 Q With the subject "Re: Format for
10 interventions."

11 A Uh-hum. (Affirmative.)

12 Q And there's one attachment that is a Word
13 document with the file name "FY 18 GA0 Open Records
14 Request_NM GNETS Template."

15 The Bates-stamp on this document is
16 GA00321183.

17 Do you recognize this?

18 A Yes.

19 Q Am I correct that you are providing the
20 attachment to this email to Ms. Cleveland in
21 response to a request from her for information she
22 needed to respond to an open records request?

23 A Yes.

24 Q And what does the attachment to this email
25 show?

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1 A The interventions that we provide, the
2 services and interventions, how it's funded, and who
3 provides those services.

4 Q And there are five interventions on this
5 chart in-kind by LEAs; is that right?

6 A Yes.

7 Q And that's Read 180/Edmark Reading, Touch
8 Math, Reading A To Z, Fountas & Pinnell Intervention
9 Program, and Success Maker Reading & Math?

10 A Yes.

11 Q Are all of these academic interventions?

12 A Yes.

13 Q Are all of these used in all North Metro
14 GNETS sites, or are there some used in some sites
15 and some used in others?

16 A They're district specific. And so some of
17 these have been updated even since this report.

18 Q Okay. We talked earlier about iReady,
19 which appears on this list as well, correct?

20 A Uh-hum. (Affirmative.)

21 Q And that's also an academic intervention?

22 A Yes.

23 Q Funded by the GNETS state grant?

24 A Yes.

25 Q Is Edgenuity an academic intervention?

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1 Q And what about, moving down, the
2 Multi-tiered Systems of Support, both Academic and
3 Behavioral?

4 A Yes.

5 Q What is that?

6 A Basically PBIS. There's an academic and a
7 behavioral tier support services. So MTSS. And the
8 tiers are interventional, are very similar.

9 Q That's funded by the GNETS state grant?

10 A Yes.

11 Q What is the BASC-3?

12 A The basic skills -- it's a, it's a
13 behavioral intervention. I'm trying to remember the
14 initials for it. But it's a behavior normed test
15 that we administer to our students that will tease
16 out, based on the responses from the teachers, from
17 the parents, from the service providers, the areas
18 where our kids are either clinically significant, at
19 risk, or, you know, on par with where they should be
20 for their same age and grade level.

21 Q And do you use that to assess where
22 students are behaviorally?

23 A Yes.

24 Q That's funded by the GNETS state grant?

25 A Yes.

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1 Q This also lists the Strength &
2 Difficulties Questionnaire, or SDQ?

3 A Yes.

4 Q What is the SDQ?

5 A That's a screening tool we use as part of
6 the GNETS Strategic Plan, that all GNETS statewide
7 were asked to use as a part of the new strategic
8 plan. So we can get a quick screener on how the
9 kids are performing.

10 Q And who asked all the GNETS programs to
11 use SDQ?

12 A The DOE.

13 Q The SDQ is funded by the GNETS state
14 grant?

15 A Yes, it is.

16 Q This also says Group & Individual
17 Therapeutic Support Services and Counseling?

18 A Yes.

19 Q That's funded by the GNETS state grant?

20 A Yes.

21 Q And is that because all of the positions
22 for the providers who deliver that intervention are
23 funded through the State grant?

24 A Yes.

25 Q There's several other interventions on

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1 A Nakeba Rahming, you know, explained to us
2 what was going on from the lawsuit at the State
3 level down into the GNETS program.

4 Q And when you say "explained to us," you're
5 talking about the GNETS directors?

6 A Yes.

7 Q When, roughly -- what was the time period
8 when you first became aware of the GNETS Strategic
9 Plan?

10 A Um, I think it took a while. I think I
11 became aware of the GNETS lawsuit, like I said,
12 around 2012-ish, but the strategic plan, Nakeba
13 Rahming was hired at the DOE to help us because of
14 her background, experiences.

15 So it may have been a year later, six
16 months later, that she came in and started working
17 on developing the plan because she had done similar
18 work in Florida.

19 Q Okay. Did Nakeba Rahming take the lead on
20 developing the GNETS Strategic Plan?

21 A She did.

22 Q Did she draft that plan?

23 A Yes.

24 Q Is North Metro GNETS obligated to comply
25 with the GNETS Strategic Plan?

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1 A Yes.

2 Q How does North Metro go about complying
3 with the GNETS Strategic Plan?

4 A Well, we have a rubric that we are
5 expected to monitor the progress of our program
6 throughout the year. So we use the GNETS Strategic
7 Plan and the expectations to monitor for fidelity to
8 make sure we're addressing all the academic and
9 behavioral and therapeutic needs of our students so
10 at the end of it it has a self-assessment, where my
11 leadership team and I come together from all of our
12 different schools and school districts and we rate
13 the program overall at the individual locations, but
14 then we submit one plan as -- because we're one
15 program.

16 Q Okay. And so you mentioned the
17 self-assessment, the things that you're
18 self-assessing your program for, are the components
19 of the GNETS Strategic Plan?

20 A Yes.

21 Q How often does North Metro conduct that
22 self-assessment?

23 A Three times a year.

24 Q Is there standardized information that
25 needs to be provided in order to establish North

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1 Metro's compliance with the GNETS Strategic Plan?

2 A Yes.

3 Q And who establishes what that information
4 is?

5 A It's included in the rubric. So we will
6 know how to self-assess where we are with the
7 language that explains whether or not we're emerging
8 or operational in that particular area.

9 So we go through everything that we're
10 doing in our program and we utilize that rubric and
11 talk about where we are and where our needs are, and
12 then we rank order everything at the end of the
13 self-assessment and we prioritize where we need the
14 most work on.

15 We submit that to the DOE at the end of
16 each year, and they provide us feedback on where we
17 are and ask us how we're planning to move forward
18 with areas of weakness.

19 Q As part of the GNETS Strategic Plan
20 process, are there onsite visits from the Georgia
21 Department of Education in connection with that
22 assessment process?

23 A There used to be.

24 Q When was the last time that the North
25 Metro GNETS program had an onsite visit from the

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1 Georgia DOE?

2 A It was definitely prior to COVID.

3 Q Who conducted that onsite visit?

4 A Vickie Cleveland -- I'm not really sure if
5 Lakesha was on board at the time. So I know it was
6 at least Vickie Cleveland.

7 Q And what did that onsite visit entail?

8 A Basically, just our documents that are
9 listed in the rubric. They would come through --
10 they would do observations of all of our classrooms,
11 walk through to see whether our standards were on
12 the board, whether or not PBIS was being
13 implemented, and then we would sit down and we would
14 have our data notebooks to go through and they would
15 talk about each of the items that were there.

16 Now all of this is submitted
17 electronically, in that GNETS tab on the portal.

18 Q And when you say "we would sit down and we
19 would have our data notebooks to go through," who is
20 the "we"?

21 A Vickie Cleveland, the GNETS director, and
22 any of the GNETS directors' designees, leadership
23 team that she would invite to come to the meeting.

24 Q So when that, when that sort of meeting
25 happened at North Metro, were there other folks on

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1 your leadership team who would participate in
2 addition to yourself?

3 A Yes.

4 Q Who are those other people?

5 A Depending on which sites we were at,
6 sometimes it was my -- definitely my site
7 coordinator that ran the building on the day to day,
8 the behavior specialist that was on board in that
9 particular school and school district, and the
10 curriculum specialist.

11 The school psychologist or social worker
12 may come in and out of the meeting as needed, but
13 those were the -- that was the typical makeup of the
14 team.

15 Q Okay. And you noted before that as part
16 of this strategic plan and assessment process that
17 you would receive feedback from the Georgia DOE?

18 A Yes.

19 Q What kind of feedback do you -- have you
20 received?

21 A Again, they go through -- now it's
22 electronic rather than, you know, onsite. But they
23 basically go through, look at our artifact, look at
24 how we scored. They all let us know if we're
25 missing information to justify or what-have-you, to

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1 upload those documents so they could review them.

2 And the specific examples that they give
3 are listed within the rubric and the language.

4 Q And when you say the specific examples
5 that they give are listed within the rubric, the
6 specific examples of what?

7 A For example, one is behavioral and
8 therapeutic support services. So it may ask things
9 like how many FBAs and BIPs that I review program
10 wide. How many of them met operational status. How
11 many team members did I have trained in, you know,
12 therapeutic services or SEL curriculum, like WhyTry
13 or LIPT, those sorts of things.

14 So it gives you specific examples under
15 each of the standards that we can submit.

16 Q Okay. And you're submitting them to sort
17 of support a rating of either not evident, emerging,
18 or operational?

19 A Correct.

20 Q Got it.

21 If there is like a deficiency or concern
22 in an area of the strategic plan that's being
23 assessed, what happens?

24 A Typically, we just develop an action plan
25 to address the issue.

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1 Q Is that an action plan that you submit to
2 the GaDOE?

3 A Yes. It's actually listed as a part of
4 the self-assessment rubric.

5 MS. GARDNER: Let's have this document
6 marked as Plaintiff's Exhibit 642.

7 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-642 was
8 marked for identification.)

9 BY MS. GARDNER:

10 Q You've been handed what's been marked as
11 Plaintiff's Exhibit 642. This is an email from you
12 to Nakeba Rahming, Desiree Woods, Derrick Gilchrist,
13 Lisa Futch, Jackie Neal, Kathy Lewis-Hawkins, and
14 Deborah Gay, dated February 9, 2016, with the
15 subject line "RE: Draft Strategic Plan."

16 This document is Bates-stamped GA00040621.
17 Do you recognize this document?

18 A Yes.

19 Q Am I correct you write in this document:
20 "Nakeba and All - Good morning. The strategic plan
21 looks great. Below are my questions in red font"?

22 A Yes.

23 Q And your email was in response to an
24 earlier email sent by Nakeba Rahming, correct?

25 A Yes.

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1 about 15 minutes, to switch something out.

2 Okay.

3 Q I think earlier you referenced a number of
4 assessments, including the SDQ and the BASC-3.

5 And those are -- am I correct in
6 remembering those are assessments given to determine
7 where students are behaviorally?

8 A Yes.

9 Q And iReady is an assessment used to
10 determine where students are academically?

11 A Yes, in reading and math.

12 Q Okay. Is there a calendar on which you
13 administer iReady diagnostic tests?

14 A Yes. Usually the DOE will give us a
15 window, and they will say, you know, we need to do
16 our beginning of the year diagnostic time frame, and
17 our mid year and the end of the year.

18 Q Okay. And is that a window that's given
19 to all GNETS directors?

20 A Yes. We do have a little flexibility.
21 Like if we say our school district is going to be on
22 fall break or something like that, they may extend
23 the window. But it's typically around the same time
24 frame.

25 Q But the Department of Education prescribes

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1 sort of what those windows are for all the GNETS
2 programs?

3 A Yes.

4 Q Is there a fee associated with using the
5 SDQ?

6 A We -- there is a fee -- there wasn't a fee
7 initially, but it seems like there was a fee for
8 scoring, not actually for the instrument but for
9 scoring there is a fee if you use their electric
10 scoring platform.

11 Q And who pays for the costs of scoring the
12 SDQ?

13 A GNETS does now out of the state budget.

14 Q Each individual program does out of the
15 state budget?

16 A Yes.

17 Q Has it always been that way?

18 A I don't think it was. I think initially
19 it seemed like the DOE paid the SDQ scoring invoice
20 for all GNETS programs.

21 Q Okay. Is there a fee associated with
22 using the BASC-3?

23 A Yes. There's a fee, but the DOE has paid
24 for the BASC because it's falling under their
25 window. So even though we have individual programs,

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1 our triangulation data to identify at risk and
2 clinically significant behaviors.

3 Q When you said they used to have the
4 electronic scoring and you did not report SDQ
5 results to the Georgia Department of Education, did
6 the Georgia Department of Education have access to
7 those scores automatically or you just never
8 reported that?

9 A I'm trying to remember how -- because I
10 actually have -- I don't recall that we had to ever
11 report it. I don't remember. I don't remember.

12 I'm sure we did but I can't swear to it.
13 I don't remember.

14 MS. GARDNER: Could I please have this
15 document marked as Plaintiff's Exhibit 647.

16 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-647 was
17 marked for identification.)

18 BY MS. GARDNER:

19 Q You've have been handed what's been marked
20 as Plaintiff's Exhibit 647.

21 This is an email thread between you and
22 Nakeba Rahming from August 9, 2016.

23 This document is Bates-stamped GA00063361.

24 Do you recognize this?

25 A Yes.

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1 Q In the earliest email in this thread,
2 which is at the bottom, you write to Nakeba Rahming
3 on August 9th, 2016, and you say: "My curriculum
4 specialist and I have been meeting how we need to
5 collect and report out on all our required
6 assessments"?

7 A Uh-hum. (Affirmative.)

8 Q "Are you going to provide us with
9 spreadsheets? If so, will you provide us guidance
10 and a spreadsheet on how you'd like us to report the
11 following: BASC-3, SDQ, iReady/iMath."

12 Do you see that?

13 A Yes.

14 Q The BASC-3, the SDQ, and the iReady/iMath
15 are the required assessments that you were referring
16 to in your email?

17 A Yes.

18 Q And then correct that Ms. Rahming replies
19 that "you will not be required to submit any data on
20 the BASC and i-Ready. I will already have access to
21 the database for all programs."

22 And then farther down she says: "The SDQ
23 is the only one that will require submission"?

24 A Yes.

25 Q Does this refresh your recollection at all

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1 on whether you were required to submit SDQ scores to
2 the Georgia DOE?

3 A Yes.

4 Q And you were?

5 A Yes. It's part of the triangulation data.
6 So that's why it's not -- yes.

7 MS. GARDNER: I'd like to ask the court
8 reporter to please mark this document as
9 Plaintiff's Exhibit 648.

10 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-648 was
11 marked for identification.)

12 BY MS. GARDNER:

13 Q You have been handed what's been marked as
14 Plaintiff's Exhibit 648. This is an email from you
15 to Nakeba Rahming and various GNETS directors, dated
16 July 26, 2016, with the subject line: "RE: GaDOE's
17 Update to DOJ."

18 A Uh-hum. (Affirmative.)

19 Q This document is Bates-stamped GA00063211.
20 Do you recognize this email?

21 A Yes.

22 Q And in this email you're commenting on an
23 update that the Georgia DOE provided to DOJ
24 regarding the work occurring in GNETS programs --

25 A Yes.

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1 A We utilized different assessment tools
2 based on what -- so, yes, but we also utilized what
3 our districts used. So when you're not utilizing
4 the same assessments to be able to report on one
5 program in multiple locations and multiple school
6 districts, it's hard because you don't have any
7 common tools to report on.

8 Q Okay. And you can't assess students sort
9 of on some common -- across some common metric?

10 A Right.

11 Q IEPs have also come up on several
12 occasions. Does the North Metro GNETS program
13 provide any reporting to the Georgia Department of
14 Education about the IEPs of students at North Metro
15 GNETS?

16 A Only when they would come out or have a --
17 submit examples of IEPs as a part of our strategic
18 plan.

19 Q So you were sometimes asked by the DOE to
20 submit examples of IEPs in connection with your
21 GNETS Strategic Plan and assessment process?

22 A Yes.

23 Q And how would that process work?

24 A I think they were -- at the time what I
25 recall is making sure that our IEPs were based on

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1 academic and behavioral needs and individual
2 supports and that the data that we were collecting
3 was really relevant to what the students' needs
4 were.

5 They also I think really had a laser focus
6 to see if we were utilizing the data from iReady
7 reading and math as part of our goals and objectives
8 and our progress monitoring so we could have those
9 common reporting pieces.

10 Also the BASC-3, we -- and the SDQs, we
11 also were expected to list the clinically
12 significant or at-risk behaviors as a part of our
13 present levels of performance and help use that
14 information for writing our behavioral goals as
15 well.

16 Q So am I correct in understanding then that
17 you would submit sample IEPs to the Georgia
18 Department of Education and they would review them?

19 A Yes. They would tell us, you know, I need
20 you to submit one EBD high school students, you
21 know, whatever, one ASD middle school student's IEP,
22 and they would go through and basically evaluate it
23 for, you know, compliance.

24 Q Did you ever get requests for IEPs that
25 would provide you with actual student names of files

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1 that the Georgia DOE wanted to see?

2 A Not that I recall. I think we had to
3 de-identify it.

4 Q When you submitted those student IEP files
5 and the Georgia DOE reviewed them, would they
6 provide feedback to you on those files?

7 A Yes.

8 Q And that was in connection with the GNETS
9 Strategic Plan process?

10 A Yes.

11 Q We were being compliance monitored prior
12 to the strategic plan.

13 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: The time is 3:25 p.m.,
14 and we are off the record.

15 (A recess was taken.)

16 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: The time is 3:36 p.m.,
17 and we are on the record.

18 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-649 was
19 marked for identification.)

20 BY MS. GARDNER:

21 Q Dr. Holifield, I am going to hand you what
22 has been marked as Plaintiff's Exhibit 649.

23 This is an email from you to Vickie
24 Cleveland, dated May 17th, 2019.

25 And this document is Bates-stamped

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1 Q Did Ms. Rahming update her vision for the
2 committee work, as you requested?

3 A When we got together she did. We talked
4 about it and then we broke out into our groups.

5 MS. GARDNER: I'd like to mark this as
6 Plaintiff's Exhibit 652.

7 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-652 was
8 marked for identification.)

9 BY MS. GARDNER:

10 Q You've been handed what's been marked as
11 Plaintiff's Exhibit 652. This is an email from you
12 to Nakeba Rahming, dated March 30th, 2016, with the
13 subject "March 2016 GaDOE GNETS Directors Meeting in
14 Milledgeville."

15 This document is Bates-stamped GA00041160.
16 Do you recognize this?

17 A Yes.

18 Q And you write to Ms. Rahming: "I sent out
19 a Survey Monkey link this meaning to all GNETS
20 directors asking them to sign up for at least one of
21 the GNETS Strategic Planning Committees."

22 Do you see that?

23 A Yes.

24 Q And these are the work groups that Ms.
25 Rahming had initially mentioned she wanted to roll

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1 out?

2 A Yes.

3 Q This then says: "Based on our
4 conversations, here are the options they were
5 provided," and it contains a list of committees,
6 correct?

7 A Yes.

8 Q Section 5a, it says: "Integration of
9 Services and Capacity Building - Exit Criteria"?

10 A Yes.

11 Q What was the aim of that committee?

12 A I think, again, just having the
13 conversations about how to reintegrate students back
14 into the LRE when they were ready to transition back
15 in.

16 Q And what was the difference between that
17 committee and then Section 5b, which says:
18 "Integration of Services and Capacity Building -
19 Reintegration Plan"?

20 A I think one focus was on -- and it may be
21 a typo, too, but I think one focus was on how to
22 actually do it with fidelity, but the other probably
23 was based on training, the teachers that were
24 receiving the students, but I don't recall what the
25 difference is right now.

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1 I'm trying to see if there's any verbiage
2 that... looks like it was just a duplication.

3 Well, it does say exit criteria and
4 reintegration plan. But exit criteria got
5 eliminated.

6 Q This also has a committee that's called
7 GNETS Operation Manual?

8 A Yes.

9 Q What is GNETS Operation Manual?

10 A It was basically a guidance document that
11 came from the DOE on how to fill out some of the
12 reports, like you pulled up today, about the data
13 management tool, The State Board Rule, and like how
14 to code different things in the different meetings.

15 Q And what was the aim of this particular
16 committee working on the GNETS operation manual?

17 A It had not been updated in a really long
18 time, and if they were moving to the strategic plan,
19 just to have a guidance document to know what the
20 expectations are.

21 Q Okay. Was that document ultimately
22 updated coming out of this committee?

23 A I don't think so, no.

24 Q And why was that?

25 A I don't recall, but I think the last